DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 625 CG 008 881

AUTHOR	Divney, Esther P.
TITLE	Helping Improve a Child's Self-Image.
INSTITUTION	Arkansas Valley Board of Cooperative Services, La Junta, Colo.
PUB DATE	74
NOTE	5p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Attitude Tests; Child Development; *Childhood Attitudes; Elementary School Students; *Identification (Psychological); Negro Students; Research Reviews (Publications); *Role Models; *Self Concept; *Self Esteem
IDENTIFIERS	Board of Cooperative Educational Services; BOCES; *Elementary Secondary Education Act Title VII; ESEA Title VII

ABSTRACT

This document reviews a doctoral dissertation on the self-concepts of Negro children for suggestions teachers can use in the classroom to improve the self-images of their own students. Many psychologists and educators view the attitudes and conceptions that the child has about himself as the central factor in his personality, and studies have shown a positive correlation between acceptance of self and acceptance of others. the doctoral project (1970) tested sixth grade students for self-acceptance and acceptance of others before and after a 16-week interaction with adult community models. Comparison of scores with a control group showed that the experimental group made significant gains in self-acceptance and acceptance of others. An implication drawn from the dissertation is that the teacher provides every child with an adult model for 180 days a year. The suggestion is made that teachers should invite to the classroom adult guests who are good, substantial, necessary citizens, for the purpose of broadening children's knowledge of the community, the world of work, and the adult world they are eager to enter. In growing more accepting of these adults, the children grow more accepting of themselves and thus improve their self-concepts. (Author/NM)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 091625

CG 008 881

EMERGENCY SCHOOL AID ACT PROJECT

HELPING IMPROVE A CHILD'S SELF-IMAGE

In the doctoral dissertation of Zadia Whisenton in 1970 at the University of Alabama the idea was tested that children could improve their self-concept, acceptance of others, values, identification figures, and vocational aspirations and expectations. This work was done with an Experimental and a Control Group of 53 Negro children in the sixth grade in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The twenty-eight children in the Experimental Group (the Control Group contained only 25 children) were involved in planned experiences with each of sixteen selected Negro adult models once a week for sixteen weeks. "For several reasons, sixth-grade children were chosen as subjects: preadolescents at this stage can generally think abstractly; they can express their feelings about their self-worth; they can view themselves with reference to the future; and they are searching for self-identity and need positive adult models in their environment."[1]

Because of the space limitation in this review, we shall consider only the one part of Mrs. Whisenton's research which is concerned with the development of the self-identity and the self-concept of the child.

The term self-concept as used in this study can be defined as "those parts of the phenomenal field which the individual has differentiated

---

[1]Whisenton, Zadia. "The Effects of Planned Experiences with Outstanding Negro Citizens of the Community on the Self-Concepts of Negro Children." University of Alabama, 1970. Pg. 65.

as definite and fairly stable characteristics of himself."[2] The self-concept is an organization of feelings and ideas within the child which are not always open to direct observation. Many psychologists and educators have come to view the attitudes and conceptions that the child has about himself as the central factor in his personality. Psychologists like Rogers "maintain that the only way to understand a child's behavior is through a knowledge of his self-perceptions, values, attitudes, and experiences--his self-concept."[3]

A child's self-concept is so very close to him and so very precious to him that when he is threatened with failure, a child will use any kind of defensive mechanism, defensive behavior, or rationalization to protect the concept of himself which he has. "Pilisuk (1952) pointed out that when there are alternatives to making a change in the self-concept, they will be used."[4]

"Studies have reported a positive correlation between the acceptance of self and the acceptance of others. Other correlational studies have shown that a child with a low self-concept is likely to be maladjusted both socially and intellectually."[5]

To meet this need for positive development of the self-concept in children, it has been considered in the research of this dissertation

---

[2]ibid., Pg. 8.

[3]ibid., Pg. 56.

[4]ibid., Pg. 57.

[5]ibid., Pg. 57.

that there is a need for positive adult models after which children can pattern their lives, speech, mannerisms and ambitions. Thirty local Tuscaloosa Negroes who were homeowners, respected and admired in the Negro community, in occupations peculiar to those of the parents of the students in the Experimental Group, and relatively unknown to the subjects, were asked for their participation in this study. Sixteen adult models (9 males and 7 females) were selected to meet with students in the Experimental Group. The model was encouraged to talk freely about himself, his home, his family, and his work to the children. The model spoke freely to the children for about half the allotted time and then the children were allowed to ask whatever questions they desired of the model.

When the children in the Experimental Group had met, listened to, and questioned all 16 models, a posttesting session was held using Berger's Questionnaire for Self-Acceptance and Acceptance of Others. The scores from this posttesting (after meeting the models from the community) were compared to the scores obtained on the same scale in the pretesting (before meeting the models from the community).

From comparing these scores, it was found that the Experimental Group, who had met and listened to the models from the community, had made significant gains in their self-acceptance and acceptance of others. The Control Group also showed some gain in their scores over the 16 week period, but not nearly the gains made by the Experimental Group.

It must be concluded that over the 16 weeks of contact with community models the students in the Experimental Group of Mrs. Whisenton's

study learn to think better of themselves (their self-concept) than they had before.

After all this extensive research, what does it mean for the students in your classroom? Essentially, it gives you the clues that you can help every child in your room think better of himself (improve his self-concept). First of all, you are his model for 180 days during the school year. Your neatness, organized approach, fairness, honesty, good diction, decent vocabulary, self-control, and enthusiasm are observed by each one of your students all day, every school day.

And then you can have guests come to your classroom. Have you thought of inviting the mailman, the grocer, the mechanic from the garage, the hairdresser, the librarian, the Doctor, a farmer, the mill operator, the telephone repairman, the shoe repairman? Here are good, substantial, necessary citizens who can broaden every child's knowledge of his community, the world of work, and the adult world he is eager to enter. Here are people a child in your classroom can identify with perhaps from the occupational group of his parents, from his own neighborhood, from his own Church, from his own racial group. Here are people whom he can admire, respect, and imitate.

So, Mrs. Whisenton's research entitled, "The Effects of Planned Experiences with Outstanding Negro Citizens of the Community on the Self-Concepts of Negro Children", in far off Alabama can help you

right here at home to improve the self-image of each child in your own classroom by providing models from the child's own community.

Written by,
Esther P. Divney
Administrative Assistant
Title VII Project ESSA
Dr. L. Gene Zumalt, Director